Killing Order Laid To Panther Official

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By William Chapman
Washington Post Staff Writer

NEW HAVEN, July 31—A New Haven detective testified today that he had been told that a national Black Panther Party official named Landon R. Williams gave an order to have a suspected police informer killed.

Det. Sgt. Vincent DeRosa said that George Sams Jr., who is the crucial prosecution witness in the New Haven Panther cases, told him of the order from Williams, who was a member of the national party's Central Committee at the time.

It was the first time that the jury in the first Panther case has heard of Williams giving any specific order to kill Alex Rackley, who was found shot to death after allegedly being tortured in party headquarters here.

Williams' name has figured prominently in the testimony of several witnesses who placed him at the apartment headquarters here on the night Rackley allegedly was taken away and shot. However, the other key prosecution witness, Warren Kimbro, testified he never heard Williams give any order for the murder.

The prosecution has contended that the first order came from Black Panther chairman Bobby G. Seale and that his instructions were passed along through Williams and Sams to the two New Haven Panthers who allegedly fired the shots. They are Kimbro, who has pleaded guilty to second-degree murder, and Lonnie McLucas, who is on trial now.

Williams, 26, was arrested in the Denver party headquarters about two weeks after the May 21, 1969, killing. He and another member accused in the New Haven case, Rory Hithe, 19, are still in Colorado fighting extradition.

Sgt. DeRosa was emphatic in his testimony this morning, although he acknowledged that his information about Williams' alleged order rests only on the word of Sams. "There's no question in my mind about this," he said.

The sergeant, who is the top police officer in this case, was testifying under cross-examination about a statement he had taken from McLucas on June 11, 1969, in the New Haven courthouse.

He testified he regarded Sams as a party "enforcer," one who was sent East from national headquarters in California to investigate the arrest of 21 New York City Panthers seized by police in an alleged bombing conspiracy.

The police claim that the Panthers suspected Rackley of informing on the New York party members and was killed for that reason.

Under cross-examination, DeRosa acknowledged that he had not known of any other cases in which Panthers had killed an alleged informer.

The defense claims that Sams, who has cooperated extensively with the prosecution, was solely to blame for arranging Rackley's torture and death.

DeRosa acknowledged that McLucas had once told him that he feared he also would be killed if he did not obey orders to shoot Rackley.

McLucas told him that he fired a second shot into Rackley's body because he thought Sams would kill him if he disobeyed, DeRosa said.